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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001767

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NSC FOR J. BADER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ID](#)

SUBJECT: CHAIR OF REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AGREES ON NEED TO  
REVIEW "STONING LAW"

REF: A. JAKARTA 1569

[1](#)B. JAKARTA 1533

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Ted Osius, reasons 1.4 (b+d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Newly-elected Chair of the Regional Representative Assembly (DPD) Irman Gusman told the DCM that the recently-passed Aceh province law that mandated the stoning to death of adulterers needed to be closely reviewed to determine whether it was in accordance with the constitution. Gusman, a close ally of President Yudhoyono, sought U.S. support for increasing the role of the DPD, a move which he believes would provide a better system of checks and balances in the legislature. Gusman also expressed his desire to partner with the United States Congress through training and exchanges of expert staff. END SUMMARY.

#### CAREFUL REVIEW OF ACEH PROVINCE LAW

[1](#)2. (C) The DCM paid a courtesy call on newly-elected Chair of the Regional Representative Assembly (DPD), Irman Gusman on October 16. Gusman, a close ally of President Yudhoyono, stated that one his most immediate challenges was dealing with a recently-passed law in the province of Aceh. The local law includes Sharia punishments for crimes, including stoning to death for adultery (reftel). Aceh was granted "special autonomy" in 2006 and is the only province in Indonesia to implement Sharia law. Gusman acknowledged that the law did not appear to be in line with the constitution and would need to be reviewed carefully. Gusman said that only a small number of individuals supported the law.

#### PROVIDING CHECKS AND BALANCES

[1](#)3. (C) Gusman explained that the DPD needed to expand its powers over legislation in order to provide "checks and balances" within the legislative process. Currently, the DPD's authority is relatively limited and restricted to merely providing guidance to the Parliament on laws dealing with regional autonomy, the political and financial relationship of the central and local government and management of natural resources. The DPD was created in 2001, with strong support from then-Parliamentary representative Gusman, in order to give the regions more political power. Moreover, the DPD is non-partisan, and therefore is designed to be free from party politics. Each of the 132 members is directly elected and represents one of the 33 Indonesian provinces. The DPD's power is derived solely from its legitimacy as the direct voice of the people. Although often referred to as the "upper house" or compared to the U.S. Senate, the assembly has largely played a ceremonial oversight role.

GREATER COOPERATION WITH U.S. CONGRESS

14. (C) A key component of Gusman's plan to increase the power of the DPD is to professionalize its members and staff.

Gusman requested assistance and support from the Embassy toward that end. Gusman said that he would like to coordinate with the United States Senate on training and exchanges of expert staff, much like the efforts already underway between the House Democracy Partnership (formerly HDAC) and the Indonesian Parliament (DPR). Training is crucial, he argues, because 100 of the 132 seats are held by newly elected members.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

15. (C) Gusman was recently elected as the Chair of the DPD after serving five years as its Deputy Chair from 2004-2009. He served as a member of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) from 1999-2004. An entrepreneur by trade, Gusman received his MBA from the University of Bridgeport in 1987. Gusman is a close associate of President Yudhoyono and often accompanies the president in meetings on bilateral and international relations, particularly those concerning economic issues. Apart from his duties as DPD Chair, Gusman is an advisor on the Economic Council Committee of Indonesia's second largest mass-Muslim organization, Muhammadiyah, which has over 35 million members, and is actively involved in the Indonesian Muslim Intellectual Association. He was recently the recipient of a leadership award presented by Consulate Medan for his outstanding contributions. As DPD Chair he is the fifth highest-ranking official in Indonesia.

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